

Highlands Newspaper

Happy New Year 2026!

FREE Every Thursday

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Twice in 2 weeks business in Highlands shuts down due to 'swatting' incident

By Lt. Tim Broughton, HPD and Kim Lewicki

On Tues., Dec. 23, around 1:16 p.m., Macon County Dis-

patch advised the Highlands Police Department of a bomb threat reported regarding the Episcopal Church of the Incar-

nation. This was the third time the church was mentioned in a threat; the first Aug. 21, 2024

• See **SWATTING** page 12

Over 200 acres are protected by HCLT in 2025

By Julie Schott
HCLT Development Director

Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust (HCLT) announces a landmark year of conservation achievement, protecting more than 200 acres of globally ecologically significant land across four major projects completed in 2025. These strategic land protections safeguard critical watersheds, habitat where rare species reside, and beloved community landscapes for future generations.

"This has been an extraordinary year for conservation in our region," said Lance Hardin. "These projects represent years of relationship-building, careful planning, and community

• See **HCLT** page 15



From left: Marie Johnson, Larry Morris, Tom Neal and Robin Neal, Betsy Carson, Bonnie Dayton, Cath Connolly-Hudson, and Andy Eidson.

Food sculpture at HC Hospital celebrates its CT and MRI and stocks food banks

By Nancy Lindell
Mission Public Relations

This holiday season, HC Hospital and Eckerd Living Center once again participated

in the HCA Healthcare Healthy Food for Healthier Tomorrows food drive. After collecting more than 2,300 pounds of canned food items for three

area food pantries - Fishes and Loaves, the Highlands Food Pantry and Highlands Emergency Council - hospital staff and

• See **SCULPTURE** page 4

•INSIDE THIS ISSUE•

Mayor on Duty	2	Dining	8
Weather	2	Here's the Thing.....	10
Snapshot.....	2	Spiritually Speaking	14
Financial Matters	4	Police & Fire Report.....	15
RE Transactions.....	5	Classifieds	17
Investing at 4,118 Ft.....	6		

Real estate is still king in Highlands

Next reappraisal is Jan. 1, 2027. Collection of data begins Jan. 1, 2026.

By Kim Lewicki

Though as of Dec. 12 total real estate transfers were down a bit compared to the same time last year - 795 to last year's 828 - real estate is still the engine driving Highlands' economy.

Often after visiting Highlands and staying with friends or family or in a hotel or short-term rental, Highlands is on the radar as a second-home or retirement destination.

What comes next is money in the local, county and state coffers in the form of property and sales taxes, and jobs across all sectors in the town and county.

Qualified sales for 2025 for the Town of Highlands were

• See **REAL ESTATE** page 6

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

• SNAPSHOT •

Infrastructure will be the focus for 2026

The new year will get off to a fast start for the town. Several projects related to town utilities will get underway as weather allows especially paving efforts and crosswalk installations.

The board will tentatively hold a special meeting on January 7th to vote to move forward in applying for a third round of Helene Relief funding. The focus of this grant program is to help towns improve the resiliency of their water supply infrastructure. During Helene, many town water systems failed or were under severe stress.

Early in January Highlands will apply for five water line replacements projects through this grant program. The cost breakdown is as follows: the Black Water Water Line replacement cost is \$410,000. The Hammond Road waterline will cost \$770,000 while the. Buttermilk waterline will cost \$325,000. The Chowan Road waterline will cost \$530,000 to replace and the Webb Branch water will cost \$417,000. The total for these grants is \$2,452,000.



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

Our town staff and the McGill Engineering consultants are optimistic that Highlands will qualify for this grant funding. If the grants are approved, it will be a major step in making critical improvements to our waterline network. All these projects will replace old, small lines with six-inch lines which will insure full fire protection in the impacted areas.

As I have noted before, the town recently received a \$1,173,000 grant to replace the 30-year-old generator that powers the water plant during emergency events.

The replacement of the generator was overdue. Ardurra Engineering helped the town secure this grant. Not only will we get a new diesel generator, but a new foundation for the generator will also be built, along with the latest digital control system. With the construction of the pre-clarifier tank and a new third filter train, the generator will have the capacity to fully power the water plant along with these additions. The start date for this project is September 2026.

In the last several years the town has secured over 13 million dollars in outside funding to address critical infrastructure needs. These grants take a long time to plan and get construction underway. Our staff and consulting engineers spend long hours developing plans and making reports to the granting agencies, but it is well worth the effort in savings for local tax and water service rate payers.

In the coming year we will continue to seek external sources to fund critical infrastructure projects. After 12 years serving as your mayor, I continually realize that maintenance of these essential town resources never stops. We are engaged in a process of continuous improvement, replacement, and upgrades. The moment we think everything is done and complete is when the town will incur long-term difficulties. Many municipalities have failed to address or ignore critical upgrades and improvements laboring under the delusion that they are saving money. That attitude only adds to a growing cost once systems begin to fail.





As the old mechanic in a car commercial used to say, "You can pay me now or pay me later." Paying later always means more; much more, especially when dealing with water, sewer, electric systems, and roads.



Photo by Kim Lewicki

Around 1:30 p.m., Tues., Dec. 23 a "swatting" bomb threat shut down Highlands' business district for the 2nd time in two weeks. HPD, MC Sheriff Dept., SBI and FBI responded. Threat was lifted around 5:30 p.m.

• WEATHER •

Thu, 1-Jan	Fri, 2-Jan	Sat, 3-Jan	Sun, 4-Jan
			
45°F 29°F	47°F 37°F	45°F 32°F	47°F 30°F
Plenty of sunshine	A brief afternoon shower	Cloudy with occasional rain	A blend of sun and clouds
RealFeel®	RealFeel®	RealFeel®	RealFeel®
High: 44° Low: 23°	High: 47° Low: 28°	High: 49° Low: 38°	High: 55° Low: 34°

For Real-time Weather and the Extended Forecast, go to www.highlandsinfo.com and click on Weather

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• FINANCIAL MATTERS •

2026 – a year of transition

Financial experts expect 2026 to be a year of steady but unspectacular growth, with lower interest rates, modestly improving markets, and continued pressure on household budgets. For everyday investors and families, that likely means a bit of relief on borrowing costs, but not a full return to the ultra-cheap money era of the past decade.

Growth and the global economy

Forecasts point to “continued expansion” of the world economy in 2026, supported by investment in artificial intelligence, government stimulus, and realignment of global trade. The United States is projected to grow a little faster than in 2025, while China and other major economies expand at moderate but positive rates.

At the same time, many consumers may still feel cautious even as growth holds up. Analysts note that worries about prices, job changes, and the cost of living are likely to linger, keeping confidence lower than headline economic data might suggest.

Interest rates, inflation and credit

After a long fight against inflation, central banks are expected to keep cutting interest rates gradually in 2026, though not aggressively. The Federal Reserve's own projections and market forecasts both point toward short term rates drifting closer to 3% by the end of the year, still above pre pandemic lows.

For households, that may translate into somewhat lower rates on mortgages,



**Michael P Henderson,
CFP® CKA®
Founder/Wealth Advisor
Crossover Point Advisors**

car loans, and credit cards, easing monthly payments but not making borrowing “cheap” again. Investors in bonds could see more stable or slightly rising prices if yields edge down, reviving interest in longer term government and municipal debt.

Technology & the future of finance

Behind the scenes, 2026 is shaping up as another big year for financial technology. Banks and fintech firms are rapidly expanding the use of artificial intelligence for tasks such as fraud detection, credit decisions, customer service, and risk management.

Industry estimates suggest AI in fintech is already a tens of billions of dollars market and growing quickly as more institutions adopt these tools.

Consumers are likely to encounter more AI powered chat tools, faster digital payments, and new types of investment and banking products built on blockchain and “tokenized” assets. Regulators, in turn, are expected to tighten oversight of these technologies, focusing on privacy, bias, and systemic risk as digital finance becomes ever more central to the global economy.

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...SCULPTURE continued from page 1

volunteers constructed a canned food.

“This year's canned food sculpture celebrates Highlands-Cashiers Hospital and HCA Healthcare's state-of-the-art investment in CT and MRI imaging technology,” said Highlands-Cashiers Hospital CEO, Tom Neal. In September, Highlands-Cashiers Hospital hosted a ribbon cutting celebrating completion of a \$5 million capital improvement project

which included the addition of a new CT scanner, MRI scanner, expanded therapy gym, and new phlebotomy area — all designed to improve access to high-quality, compassionate care for patients across the Plateau.

Mayor Pat Taylor joined Tom Neal, along with Highlands-Cashiers Hospital and Eckerd Living Center staff and community members, for a presentation

• 2025 RE TRANSACTIONS AS OF DEC. 12 •

Town of Highlands (The 204, \$0 transactions are not listed)

Parcel Number	Deed Date	Assessed Value	Name	Sale Price
7540416044	12/9/25	2262430	424 PINE STREET LLC	7,000,000
7540225241	1/17/25	4366660	BRIDGEFORD, GREGORY M	5,100,000
7449397491	3/3/25	2220060	WALLIS, TIMOTHY R	4,200,000
7439784636	2/14/25	2803700	BRIDGES, JONATHAN B	3,900,000
7439788058	8/27/25	2709100	MOOREWOOD ROAD, LLC	3,650,000
7540406576	1/17/25	2274840	TH HIGHLANDS, LLC	3,475,000
7540237175	11/25/25	1903860	SABINEOWNER, LLC	3,375,000
7550314021	1/9/25	1822300	CAPPSTONE PARTNERS, LLC	2,750,000
7530820359	10/28/25	1894950	BAYMAN, ANDREW T	2,700,000
7540519220	6/27/25	1510180	NSH PROPERTIES, LLC	2,695,000
7439986449	8/8/25	2163120	PETTWAY, PATTEN	2,500,000
7540751749	11/17/25	2515050	CUMBIE TR. FBO CUMBIE,	2,500,000
7540044954	12/12/25	2272290	DEMACEO, JORGE	2,495,000
7540646595	1/24/25	2032140	DILLY TRUST	2,300,000
7540427074	6/4/25	1472570	KING, DAVID MOORE TRUST	2,250,000
7550047204	2/3/25	1084230	RUSSELL, JOHN E	2,150,000
7530935399	9/22/25	1647250	HERMAN, W. ANDREW IV	2,135,000
7449062528	10/10/25	1944520	DEMO, MICHAEL	1,995,000
7550412577	4/4/25	1102240	TAGUE, CHERYL	1,925,000
7439686377	9/17/25	1835150	SYMBAS, ALICE S 2012 TR	1,910,000
7439975409	10/17/25	1237630	BILLINGS, LEE TORRENCE	1,850,000
7530703905	8/15/25	1354570	CABCC-NC, LLC	1,850,000
7540610513	8/14/25	1320690	LINEBERRY, LINDA	1,850,000
7540516054	7/30/25	1357540	MARSYL, LLC	1,849,000
7540019908	11/12/25	1160950	LUCKETT, LAURA C	1,819,500
7530812084	9/22/25	1027860	CALLAHAN, TERESA	1,750,000
7540351895	2/26/25	1512610	COTTAGE CULTURE, LLC	1,725,000
7540354141	2/26/25	100	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540354336	2/26/25	125000	BLOCK, JERALD P	1,725,000
7540354415	2/26/25	100000	BLOCK, JERALD P	1,725,000
7540356046	2/26/25	222370	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540356336	2/26/25	179820	MINKER, MARLYN S TRUST	1,725,000
7540356436	2/26/25	723400	MINKER, MARLYN S TRUST	1,725,000
7540356525	2/26/25	129600	BLOCK, JERALD P	1,725,000
7540357712	2/26/25	269890	RIVERWALK LEDGE, LLC	1,725,000
7540358146	2/26/25	199230	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540358724	2/26/25	171070	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540358974	2/26/25	300000	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540359048	2/26/25	198720	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540359331	2/26/25	100	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540359741	2/26/25	141590	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540359978	2/26/25	300000	STAGNER FAMILY TRUST	1,725,000
7540362113	2/26/25	300000	JANKE, KYRA LYNN	1,725,000
7540363009	2/26/25	300000	JANKE, KYRA LYNN	1,725,000
7540364009	2/26/25	300000	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540365005	2/26/25	300000	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540365093	2/26/25	300000	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540366080	2/26/25	300000	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540450232	2/26/25	235010	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540450637	2/26/25	815470	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540450946	2/26/25	300000	STAGNER FAMILY TRUST	1,725,000
7540451357	2/26/25	179820	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540452494	2/26/25	179820	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540452587	2/26/25	75000	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540454540	2/26/25	184680	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540455435	2/26/25	100	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540456508	2/26/25	198720	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540456819	2/26/25	150000	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540457785	2/26/25	62000	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540457983	2/26/25	222370	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540458792	2/26/25	64000	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540459940	2/26/25	235010	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540550874	2/26/25	236930	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540551617	2/26/25	222370	HIGHLANDS RIVERWALK, LLC	1,725,000
7540643270	5/30/25	1387530	EVANS, CAMERON	1,725,000
7540649671	10/16/25	124190	DELMONTE, DAVID PAUL	1,635,000
7540740748	10/16/25	120960	DELMONTE, DAVID PAUL	1,635,000
7540741667	10/16/25	1173380	DELMONTE, DAVID PAUL	1,635,000
7530804944	9/17/25	1268370	NICHOLS, NANCY	1,625,000
7540319694	5/13/25	941670	MITCHELL, JERRY W TRUST	1,595,000

• See RE TRANSACTIONS page 11



66 Summit Trail, Highlands

\$2,450,000 • MLS# 1002246



4 Woodland Lane, Highlands

\$1,350,000 • MLS# 1001756



700 Silly Ridge, Scaly Mountain

\$5,800,000 • MLS# 1001131

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...REAL ESTATE continued from page 1

83, with 87 qualified for Highlands Township, and 34 for Flats Township (Scaly Mountain).

The 2024 qualified sales for Town of Highlands were 96 with 161 qualified for Highlands Township and 40 for Flats Township.

A qualified sale in real estate is a sale where the price accurately reflects the property's market value.

Sales that are not reflective of the market value are considered unqualified. This is often the case with sales between family members because the sale price is usually much less than the market value and not a true monetary transaction between a willing seller and willing buyer -- meaning something affects the fair market value.

Fair market value (FMV) is the estimated price an asset would sell for in the current market under normal conditions. FMV assumes that both the buyer and seller are acting in their own best interests, are well-informed, and are under no undue pressure to buy or sell.

This year the Town of Highlands had 311 parcels transferred -- 83 qualified, 97 unqualified and 131 with \$0 transfers.

A \$0 real estate transaction usually means a non-arm's-length transfer, like gifting property to family, putting it in a trust, or transferring it during a divorce, where no actual money changes hands. It's common in tax records for intra-family transfers, inheritances, or divorce settlements, but it is not considered a standard market sale.

The highest sale in the Town of Highlands was one sale at \$7,000,000; the next highest one was one sale at \$5,000,000 and the next was one sale at \$4,000,000.

There were four sales at \$3,000,000+, 10 at \$2,000,000+, 74 at \$1,000,000+, 9 at \$900,000+, 7 at \$800,000+, 11 sales at \$700,000+, 13 sales at \$600,000+, 14 sales at \$500,000+, 6 sales at \$400,000+, 9 sales at \$300,000+, 4 sales at \$200,000+, 12 sales at \$100,000+, and 4 sales at less than \$100,000.

This year Highlands Township had 371 transfers -- 87 qualified sales, 80 unqualified sales and 204 with \$0 transfers.

The highest sale in the Highlands Township was one for \$9,000,000, followed by one sale of \$4,000,000+, 5 sales at \$3,000,000+, 12 sales at \$2,000,000+,

52 sales at \$1,000,000+, 7 sales at \$900,000+, 12 sales at \$800,000+, 6 sales at \$700,000+, 7 sales at \$600,000+, 8 sales at \$500,000+, 8 sales at \$400,000+, 6 sales at \$300,000+, 9 sales at \$200,000+, 14 sales at \$100,000+, 19 sales at less than \$100,000.

This year the Flats Township (Scaly Mountain) had 113 transfers -- 34 qualified, 22 unqualified and 57 with \$0 transfers.

The highest sale in the Flats Township was one at \$7,462,000, followed by 2 sales at \$3,000,000+, 2 sales at \$2,000,000+, 6 sales at \$1,000,000+, \$0 sales at \$900,000+, 1 sale at \$800,000+, 0 sales at \$700,000+, 3 sales at \$600,000+, 4 sales at \$500,000+, 2 sales at \$400,000+, 6 sales at \$300,000+, 7 sales at \$200,000+, 7 sales at \$100,000+, and 15 sales at less than \$100,000.

Macon County reappraises property every four years so the next reappraisal is January 1, 2027 with the collection of data beginning Jan. 1, 2026.

"For the 2026 year, our appraisers will be visiting properties to check sales, and to check properties that we have not been to in over 4 years," said Macon County Tax Appraiser Abby Braswell. "Our appraisers will knock before they start their assessment and if no one is home they will leave a notice card to let the homeowner know they have been there."

Braswell said there is a phone number on the card -- call 828-349-2147 or 828-349-2148 -- if the taxpayer/occupant has questions or they can go to <https://gis.maconnc.org/Maps/default.htm> to review their property card to and report any errors.

"The purpose of a reappraisal is to bring all real property values reflect their current market value as of January 1 of the appraisal year," said Braswell. "According to NC General Statute 105-283 the assessed value should be 100% of the fair market value. Reappraisal of property equalizes values of real property and creates a fair and equitable assessment for all real property."

Braswell said for the reappraisal to be successful, the data needs to be as accurate. She encourages people to call the tax office to ask questions or to get obtain information about their property so that if something is incorrect it can be corrected before the reappraisal.

• INVESTING AT 4,118 Ft •

A New Year, a new chapter in real estate

As we turn the calendar to a new year, many people are also quietly turning pages in their lives -- rethinking where they live, how they live, and what truly matters. Real estate has always been about more than houses. It's about chapters, transitions, and fresh starts.

The past few years reminded us that the real estate market is never static. Interest rates fluctuate. Inventory shifts. Buyer behavior evolves. And yet, one thing remains constant: people still want a place that feels like home -- whether that's a second home, a downsized nest, a mountain retreat, or a fresh beginning after a major life change.

I understand personally how quickly life can change. My husband passed away suddenly during what seemed like an ordinary moment. In an instant, everything shifted, and I had to redefine what "home" truly meant to me. That experience profoundly shaped how I guide my clients today -- with sensitivity, perspective, and an understanding that timing and trust matter just as much as market knowledge.

The start of a new year typically brings renewed activity. Buyers who paused during the holidays return with clearer intentions and realistic expectations. Sellers often use January as a planning month -- preparing homes, reviewing pricing strategies, and deciding when to make a move.

We're also seeing a more thoughtful market. Today's buyers are doing their homework. They're asking better questions and making decisions based not just on price, but on lifestyle, community, and long-term value. Sellers, too, are more strategic -- understanding that preparation, presentation, and pricing matter more than ever.

While headlines may suggest uncertainty, experience tells a different story. Markets don't disappear -- they shift. And with that shift comes opportunity for those who are well-advised. Our plateau is uniquely positioned, offering a rare combination of natural beauty, privacy, legacy properties, and emotional connection that



Pat Allen BIC
Allen Tate Realtors/Pat Allen Realty Group.

continues to attract buyers year after year.

For luxury buyers, the new year can offer distinct advantages: less competition, greater negotiating strength, and the ability to secure a property ahead of peak spring demand. For sellers, entering the market prepared and priced correctly allows a home to stand out from the start, rather than requiring adjustments later. Once the decision to sell has been made, thoughtful action often

proves more effective than waiting.

Behind every transaction is a story -- a family growing, a couple downsizing with intention, someone starting a new chapter, or a buyer finally acquiring the home they have envisioned for years. The best real estate decisions are made with clarity, confidence, and trusted guidance -- not urgency or fear, as we witnessed during the COVID era.

As we step into the new year, it's a good time to reflect on what "home" truly means. Not just square footage or location, but how you want to live this next chapter of your life. I hear so many memories shared from years ago with tales of hiking, walking under waterfalls, Sunday brunch at the former High Hampton (no air-conditioning but the fried chicken and creamed corn were worth it!) lunch at the Central House Restaurant -now Madison's -- with the best chicken salad ever and adorable waitresses in little eyelet hats, great burgers at the Mountaineer, and one red light due to the pesky tourists "taking over!" A stay at the King's Inn or Phelps House or the fun memories of Camp Merrie-Woode. And so many share: "I've been coming here since I was a kid," and whose nostalgia beckons their return. The emotional connection is magical.

The new year doesn't promise certainty -- but it does promise possibility. And in real estate, possibility is where every great story begins.

Julie Osborn (daughter and Realtor extraordinaire) and I wish you all many blessings for the new year...and the best blessing of all is good health.



Wishing you health, happiness, and peace in 2026
HAPPY NEW YEAR

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR BUSINESS AND
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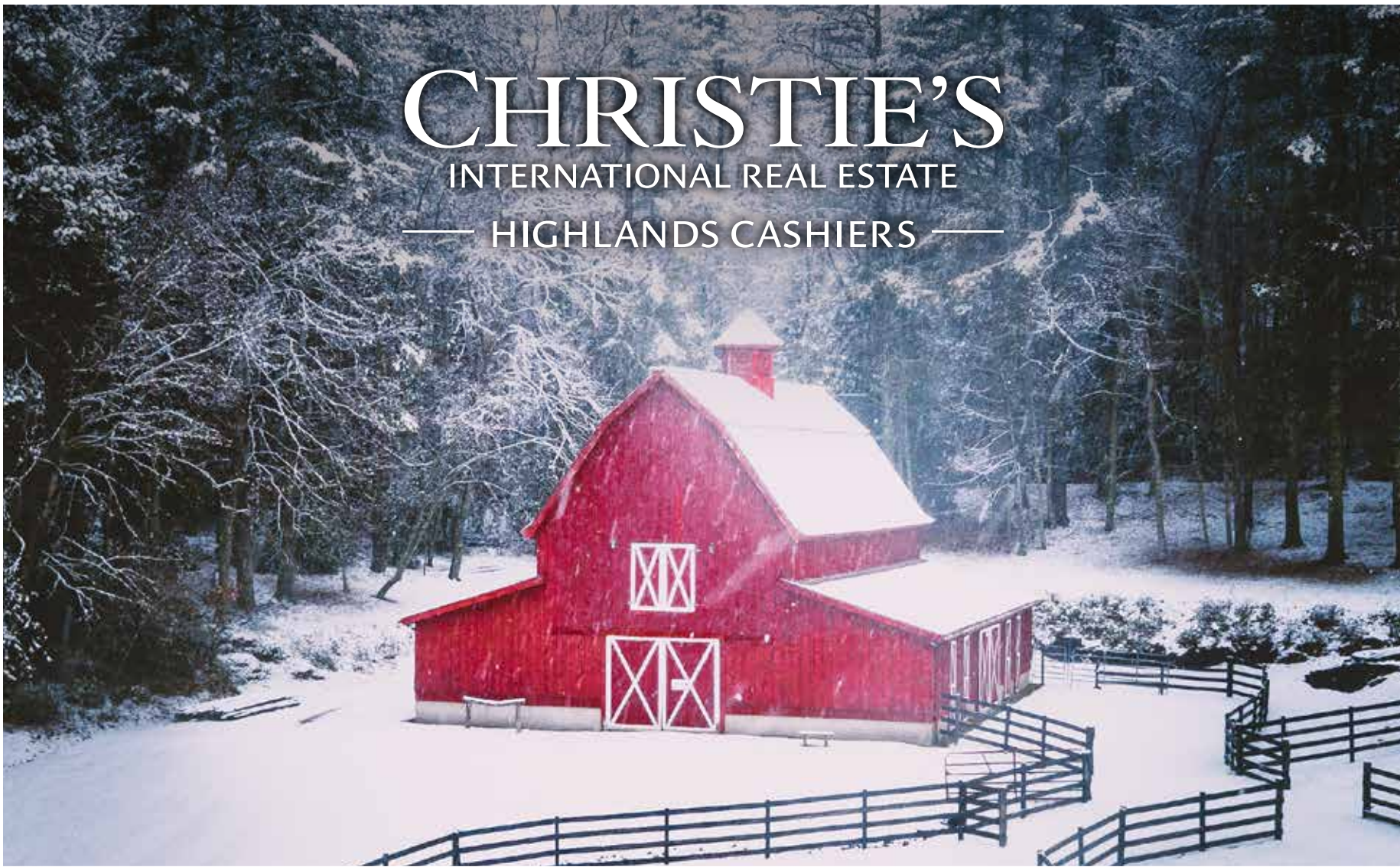


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• HERE'S THE THING •

'Why Us Kids?'

I'm often reminded of something I heard in a small film produced a long time ago. The line was uttered by actor Ben Gazzara in a film titled "Saint Jack." It went something like, "There are questions to which there are no answers, and there are problems to which there are no solutions." Of course, while we all understand this notion, we sometimes are moved to wonder why, as in, "why are there unanswered questions and/or unsolved problems?"

We live in a great country with lots of brilliant people, so why haven't we figured out, well, everything? Some of us actually believe or say we believe we have all the answers. The truth is most of us don't really devote many brain cells to things that simply don't impact our own lives. Human nature, I suppose. Well, perhaps not all humans.

I recently made the acquaintance of a 13-year-old young woman named Grace Parker. Gracie attends school in Macon County. Her personal story is, let's just say, extraordinary. Frankly, so is she. She visited the Rotary Club of Highlands at a recent Bingo night. We were quite impressed.

Gracie was and is the driving force behind a licensed 501(c)3 non-profit organization called Why Us Kids? You can meet her and learn more about her and her organization by visiting www.whyskids.org. I encourage everyone to visit her website, and to never lose sight of the question and problem this remarkable child – yes, 13 is still a child – is asking us to consider.

Childhood trauma – abuse, neglect, household dysfunction – impacts nearly half of all children in the United States, according to a study by Johns Hopkins. It takes many forms – parental alcohol and drug abuse, other kinds of direct and indirect physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, bullying, diagnosed mental illness, incarceration – and manifests in several different ways including PTSD, depression, loss of focus and an inability to concentrate.

In recent years, incidents of childhood trauma have been magnified by film, television, news media and scripted programming, the Internet and, of course, social media.

It's seldom visible and often doesn't lend itself to easy non-professional diagnosis. Left unaddressed in early childhood, it can be isolating for children, especially so for younger, elementary school-aged children.

Here's the thing. Unless we're aware of or have personal experience with childhood



Bud Katz

trauma this might be something we don't understand or even think much about.

Enter Gracie Parker and Why Us Kids.

Gracie and her Macon County, NC-based non-profit want to shine a bright light on the reality of childhood trauma here in our local community, around our state, and ultimately throughout our nation. She also

wants to help mitigate its effects by obtaining funding to place a licensed mental health counselor first, in every public elementary school, starting in Macon County, then expanding to the rest of North Carolina and ultimately throughout the United States.

Often, the greatest potential harm from childhood traumatic events happens to kids in the age group populating our elementary schools. These children, living in the eye of a storm they can't possibly understand, are typically between five and ten years of age, and likely have no one to turn to. A licensed, professional mental health counselor within the confines of their school could literally constitute a lifeline for these kids.

Highlands is a generous community. Most of us, to one degree or another, support local, regional, and national charitable and institutional non-profit organizations to the very best of our individual abilities and circumstances. If childhood trauma, something that clearly is either at or is approaching epidemic status in the United States, resonates with you, please visit www.whyskids.org, meet Gracie Parker, and consider getting involved.

As with Ben Gazzara's character in his film, "Saint Jack," you and I can understand the idea that in life there are truly unanswerable questions and unsolvable problems. The unaddressed infliction of physical, mental and emotional trauma on young children simply should not be one of them.

• Bruce F. "Bud" Katz, and his wife, Lynn, have lived year-round in Highlands since 2011. Bud is the author of four novels and a work of non-fiction. He facilitates the Highlands Writers Group and spends much of his time in front of a computer making words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs, ... etc. You can contact him regarding his books, this column, or for information about the Highlands Writers Group, at brucekatzauthor@gmail.com

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...RE TRANSACTIONS continued from page 5

Parcel Number	Deed Date	Assessed Value	Name	Sale Price	Parcel Number	Deed Date	Assessed Value	Name	Sale Price
7540317313	3/7/25	742500	EIGHT ON OAK, LLC	1,575,000	7449668652	7/28/25	800000	WALLACE, TONYA M TRUST	850,000
7550415530	10/14/25	1270620	CROMWELL, HENRY F	1,560,000	7530402343	6/20/25	704860	BERNSTEIN, B JASON	850,000
7550415678	10/14/25	35000	CROMWELL, HENRY F	1,560,000	7530758512	2/25/25	464970	EVANS, DAVID LEE JR	845,000
7540419779	10/6/25	781930	GREATER DECATUR SM, LLC	1,502,000	7530951141	10/28/25	891970	MATTIMORE, MICH & NAN TR	830,000
7530776538	11/13/25	1479040	HAWKINS, MARION DARGAN	1,475,000	7540130278	9/9/25	680560	1875, LLC	830,000
7530804928	9/25/25	1012100	HARSHFIELD, EDWARD G.	1,450,000	7540813459	6/3/25	1372580	JONES, VIRGINIA MOONEY TR	787,500
7540401305	8/12/25	857640	COCHRAN BUS PROP LLC	1,400,000	7449199663	3/20/25	578230	BERGER, DAVID VINCENT	786,500
7530814267	8/22/25	807100	REEVES, WILLIAM B	1,350,000	7449192198	11/20/25	829070	CHIZARI, MOHAMMAD	775,000
7540140776	11/3/25	631840	LITTLETON, JASON T	1,350,000	7449568836	7/1/25	468760	CAMERON, DONALD LEON III	775,000
7449060256	9/19/25	951320	GABBARD, ANDREA W	1,325,000	7530404193	6/13/25	607510	425 DOG MOUNTAIN, LLC	750,000
7449598989	11/20/25	949240	OVERFLOW, LLC	1,325,000	7540167142	1/30/25	486790	HODGE, LARRY DALE	750,000
7530814115	7/21/25	1233170	TOWNS, THOMAS R	1,300,000	7530848899	3/12/25	403310	BLOUNT, WENDY	745,000
7530856018	12/12/25	924370	GRAHAM, TRUST	1,300,000	7439690936	11/14/25	376310	HYDE, PAMELA G	725,000
7540413586	5/9/25	1017320	MENON, ANIL	1,300,000	7540001729	10/13/25	530770	ROLLINGS, STEVEN POWERS	720,000
7540061388	8/21/25	1057360	CITRON, GARY	1,225,000	7439696401	11/7/25	453770	COWEN, JEFFREY A	700,000
7449279846	9/25/25	774350	STRICKLAND, MICHAEL A	1,180,000	7540508258	9/23/25	679340	SELF, LOUISA H	700,000
7540117651	10/1/25	901690	WIEBE, C MICHELLR	1,080,000	7530810761	6/5/25	1278960	NEWTON, REBECCA M	680,000
7540406761	5/15/25	349610	N. 5TH STREET 202&204, LLC	1,055,000	7540121622	11/13/25	449370	DEMETZ, PATRICIA	654,000
7540406773	5/15/25	463760	N. 5TH STREET 202&204, LLC	1,055,000	7439761559	3/10/25	628670	SINCLAIR FAMILY PARTNER, LP	650,000
7449661883	6/24/25	654640	FULP, WANDA	1,050,000	7449191409	4/21/25	567470	PARKER, TRUST	650,000
7449672586	8/14/25	765200	GREGORY, JEFFREY SCOTT	1,010,000	7550214339	1/14/25	250000	SAULS, MCROY	650,000
7540506232	5/28/25	754680	MORNING STAR HGHS, LLC	998,000	7550215348	1/14/25	250000	SAULS, MCROY	650,000
7540023467	10/2/25	590020	OSBORN LIVING TRUST	980,000	7540359978	10/10/25	300000	STAGNER FAMILY TRUST	625,000
7530508379	9/2/25	659050	JACKSON, WILLIAM L JR	957,500	7540418106	11/12/25	534570	MULL, AMBER	625,000
7540055978	9/12/25	588450	MCKNIGHT, MASON HARRIS	955,000	7540450946	10/10/25	300000	STAGNER FAMILY TRUST	625,000
7540507287	8/1/25	785980	SEQUOYAMOUR, LLC	950,000	7449061795	9/30/25	500000	WAYMAN, CARROLL FAM. TR.	620,000
7530405928	4/30/25	670090	COVENTRY, ELAINE B TRUST	945,000	7439762015	7/17/25	434190	GARRETT HOSPITALITY, LLC	604,000
7540229023	2/20/25	780900	RALEIGH, SUSAN	915,000	7540247466	10/2/25	359990	JOHNSON, JAMES	602,500
7530930482	5/22/25	875700	CARTER, MELINDA	900,000	7449790760	10/21/25	1693020	HART, KATHY	600,000
7530955268	8/22/25	936780	BAVELY, KATHLEEN M	900,000	7439690178	5/2/25	456360	ELLIOTT, CHRISTOPHER P	595,000
7530418718	6/2/25	1036500	BOOTHBY, LAWRENCE	894,500	7449581095	10/7/25	524800	DUNND PRORERTIES, LLC	570,000
7540512516	4/29/25	1112200	UNDERWOOD, JOHN	875,000					

• See RE Transactions page 12

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One of the last BEST locations this close to Main Street.

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\$2,700,000

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2BR/2BA storybook cabin

MLS #105769
\$750,000

Private location. Close to town, landscaped with perennials, wrap-around deck, easy parking and workshop



Your own Highlands Sanctuary

MLS #1002006
\$3,850,000

Walk to town and enjoy the beautifully landscaped lot, with pond and waterfall, view of Harris Lake and Satulah Mountain.
4 BR/4 bath, very unique with too many features to list.



2 minutes to Main Street

MLS #1002100
\$765,000

4 BR/2 bath 'yesteryear' cottage with 'Old Highlands' Charm. Love it like it is, renovate to your liking, or use while building your dream home on the 1.21 +/- acre lot.



Have you ever wanted your own waterfall?

MLS # 1002193
\$995,000

Satulah Falls is this 3.48 acre tract just outside the town limits. This is the last piece of land owned by the Harbison family.



401 N. 5th Street, Highlands • 828-526-3717 • info@highlandscalling.com • www.highlandscalling.com



...SWATTING continued from page 1

and the second Thurs., Dec. 11.

Highlands Police officers responded and began establishing a perimeter around the church and the surrounding block of buildings.

As officers arrived, additional information from Macon County Dispatch indicated the caller was not reporting a bomb threat specifically at the church. Instead, the caller stated he was at “400 Main Street” with a bomb and made a generic threatening statement toward Christmas shoppers in the area.

“This is not a hoax. I am at 400 Main Street with a bomb and all the Christmas shoppers are gonna die,” said the caller.

Responding units recognized that “400 Main Street” is not a valid address; however, the area where that address would be located is a heavily utilized business intersection being from 4th to 4th streets so a “shelter in place” order

was given.

The Highlands Police Department requested additional assistance from Highlands Fire and Rescue, Town of Highlands Public Works crews, and the Macon County Sheriff’s Office to assist with closing inbound roads specifically at 5th and Main, 4th and Main and 3rd and Main and establishing a secure perimeter. The Western Carolina University Police Department’s Bomb Detection K-9 unit was also requested.

Once inbound traffic was stopped, officers began sweeping Main Street for suspicious persons or devices and advised pedestrians and business employees to seek shelter or evacuate the area.

Business at area shops and restaurants was shut down as pedestrian/shoppers left the area.

Highlands Police officers then conducted a preliminary visual inspection of vehicles parked the length of Main Street

• See **SWATTING** page 15



Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church

Christmas Eve Masses

Our Lady of the Mountains • 2 pm

St. Jude’s Catholic Church (Sapphire Valley) 4 pm

Christmas Day Masses

St. Jude’s Catholic Church (Sapphire Valley) • 9 am

Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church • 11 am

New Year’s Day Masses

Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church • 9:30 am

St. Jude’s Catholic Church • 11 am

315 N. 5th Street, Highlands • 828-526-2418

www.olmhighlands.com

3011 U.S. 64, Sapphire • 828-743-5717

www.stjudeofsapphirevalley.org

...RE TRANSACTIONS continued from page 11

Parcel Number	Deed Date	Assessed Value	Name	Sale Price
7540362113	10/28/25	300000	JANKE, KYRA LYNN	550,000
7540363009	10/28/25	300000	JANKE, KYRA LYNN	550,000
7540922200	4/8/25	654120	THAMES, EVELYN KNOK WHITE TR.	532,000
7540357712	8/7/25	269890	RIVERWALK LEDGE, LLC	525,000
7530811063	5/16/25	599560	THOMAS, JULIAN M TRUST	520,000
7449165778	8/8/25	307140	HALL, DANIEL B	515,000
7439598345	8/1/25	332650	OSBORN LIVING TRUST	500,000
7439764391	12/4/25	619760	BOOTH, HUREY JR	500,000
7439971127	11/3/25	940910	MATTHEWS, JOAN TOWLES	500,000
7449148953	3/10/25	150000	CAMINATA, LLC	500,000
7449156104	3/10/25	150000	CAMINATA, LLC	500,000
7540247635	8/12/25	561770	LAMAR, THOMAS A III	500,000
7439490850	8/8/25	324690	BIRCHETT, STEPHEN JACK	483,500
7540711839	4/8/25	965710	STELLING, THIJS AND WUPKE TRUST	475,000
7530407254	8/7/25	252710	FEYERABEND, JOEY L	460,000
7439763355	5/30/25	547420	BAYOU CAPITAL PARTNERS, LLC	450,000
7540666266	7/15/25	260090	RETZER, LLC	420,000
7540509538	8/18/25	293680	BURGESS, CLINT	413,000
7540813459	6/3/25	1372580	JONES, VIRGINIA MOONEY TRUST	394,000
7540505743	9/2/25	619210	WINTER, BEVERLY O TRUST	385,000
7540354415	4/23/25	100000	BLOCK, JERALD P	358,000
7540356525	4/23/25	129600	BLOCK, JERALD P	358,000
7540247831	2/14/25	428230	LAMAR, THOMAS A III	350,000
7540411529	9/2/25	318750	BARRON, JOSE JUAN PARAMO	340,000
7540845572	8/18/25	400000	CLARKE, SHERROD B JR	331,000
7540034083	11/24/25	793510	WALKER, SHARYN H	325,000
7439599851	9/24/25	419610	TATE, JAMES P	310,000
7530827616	2/13/25	506880	CAMERON, CLAYTON TRUST	275,000
7540356436	8/8/25	723400	MINKER, MARLYN S TRUST	265,000
7540007190	12/10/25	203280	FUTRAL, WILLIAM	250,000
7449151267	4/25/25	200000	MYSZKA, SCOTT	230,000
7449097496	10/22/25	130000	VERTICAL ELEMENT NC, LLC	185,000
7449178965	1/17/25	319340	USDF, LLC	172,000
7439689095	12/4/25	300000	SLEMONS, SUSAN MATHERS TRUST	170,000
7449092367	3/14/25	1105850	VERTICAL ELEMENT NC, LLC	168,500
7449194170	11/3/25	90000	VERTICAL ELEMENT NC, LLC	165,000
7542304973	8/22/25	141880	YUBA SUTTER PROPERTIES, LLC	162,000
7540356336	9/17/25	179820	MINKER, MARLYN S TRUST	160,000
7530938137	8/7/25	166470	CROSS, CHRISTOPHER BRENT	138,000
7439950967	7/18/25	300000	SEWELL, JERE	125,000
7542304973	7/14/25	141880	YUBA SUTTER PROPERTIES, LLC	120,000
7540354336	11/7/25	125000	BLOCK, JERALD P	119,000
7449685987	9/17/25	62180	POTTS, WILLIAM TERRY	100,000
7449088743	10/31/25	40000	BARBER, JONATHAN MATTHEW	80,000
7449134973	8/5/25	1000000	POELLNITZ, ROBERT W JR	42,500
7439879266	6/3/25	2543550	RECKNOR, CHRISTOPHER P	41,000
7530907256	4/8/25	233200	WILSON, ELIZABETH ANNE REESE	2,500

Flats Township/Scaly Mountain (The 57, \$0 transactions are not listed)

Parcel Number	Deed Date	Assessed Value	Name	Sale Price
7409634352	1/14/25	3166490	HOLDBROOKS, KEITH & JACQUELINE TR	7462000
7419642390	9/9/25	2392300	KING TIDE MOUNTAIN, LLC	3700000
7419642554	9/9/25	50000	KING TIDE MOUNTAIN, LLC	3700000
7418282596	12/2/25	717090	SCALY MOUNTAIN INVESTMENTS, LLC	2500000
7419641611	8/25/25	908320	GAP ROAD, LLC	2200000
7409414111	11/19/25	1135230	NICHOLS, GARY	1900000
7409334149	11/7/25	1485880	BRIGHT, TOBY	1760000
7409499948	3/7/25	1032230	FL TRUST	1450000
7500408632	3/7/25	44590	FL TRUST	1450000
7409927899	12/16/25	713950	BUCK KNOB FARM, LLC	1265000
7418281204	12/2/25	238570	SCALY MOUNTAIN INVESTMENTS, LLC	1000000
7418458819	9/17/25	676930	MURPHY, MARY ELIZABETH TRUST	871000
7419107705	5/27/25	563930	ROOTED RETREATS NC, LLC	650000
7418359672	7/24/25	649590	TASSEL, GEORGE MARTIN VAN JR	640000
7418064592	12/8/25	548350	JOHNSON, RAYMOND J.	620000
7409781655	11/14/25	312550	MARTIN, TYLER ROBERT	580000
7419312114	10/3/25	36550	VIRTUE DESIGN, LLC	565000
7408315610	8/12/25	492030	WILSKY, CHAD E	562500
7408117273	11/13/25	351380	SNELL, KEVIN B	525000
7419415924	1/3/25	390340	SCALY MOUNTAIN INVESTMENTS, LLC	440000

• See **RE TRANSACTIONS** page 18

Main Street

COUNTRY CLUB PROPERTIES

Mtn. Fresh

Wright Sq. 828-526-2520 | www.ccphighlandsnc.com | ccp4terry@gmail.com

A blank canvas, ready for you to make your own tastes, this 2 bedroom, 2 bath condo needs refurbishing but is in a great location 2 blocks from Main Street. Great covered glass porch. Currently rented and shown by appointment. Offered at \$575,000. mls #1001811



This home offers a serene escape with the comfort of nearby city amenities. Inviting living area. Recent updates include a new roof. Offered at \$699,000 mls # 1002204



Trillium Place is convenient to Main Street. 3BD/2BA with primary on the main. Wood burning fireplace, updated kitchen and baths. Screened in porch and backyard. Offered at \$945,000. mls #1002278



Do not miss this move in condition, spectacular house located off Buck creek road on Western Rhodes Road. 3 bedrooms, plus additional flex spaces. Multiple fireplaces. Open Great room concept with custom kitchen, plank wood floors, stone fireplace in the Great room that flows onto a covered porch with hot tub spa. Masters on main and upper floors, plus guestrooms complete with baths. Outbuilding. Trails lead to your privacy and to explore your own kingdom. Offered at \$1,895,000.



Make an appointment to view this almost new 2-bedroom, 2 bath home that sits on a lovely wooded .31 acres lot that is all usable land. Split bedroom plan with lovely baths, open great room with peninsula kitchen that features stainless appliances, quartz counter tops, gray kitchen cabinets. This home is move-in ready and can be year-round, summer, or can be an income producer. Offered at \$689,000 mls #1002169



This true in-town 2BD/2BA is only 4 blocks from Mountain Fresh grocery. Close to Harris Lake and Lakeside dining! On city sewer for easy expansion. Wood floors, fireplace, large deck overlooking woods in the back. One-car carport. Metal roof. HVAC. Offered at \$849,000. mls #1001893



Located atop a ridge about 7 miles from town, this diamond in the rough is sitting upon 15 acres with stunning mountain vistas. The house has heart of pine floors, huge antique beams in the coffered ceiling, and a stone fireplace. Kitchen is functional and ready to be renovated to your personal tastes. Main floor master with ensuite bath. Upper level has 2 additional guest rooms with views and ensuite baths. Detached garage has a bay with workshop storage room and a full upstairs efficiency apartment. Offered at \$4,200,000 mls #1002161



Get both privacy and lock and leave living with this condo at Highlands Mountain Club. 2 bedrooms, 2 baths, great screened in porch. Primary bath has been totally renovated with a dream shower and tile floors. View overlooks a pristine lake. Spend your afternoons rocking on the screen porch. Open pass-through kitchen/dining living makes entertaining a breeze. Furnishings negotiable. Offered at \$525,000. mls #1001347



Great potential from this 3-building complex, two buildings are currently leased. Sizes vary from about 700, 1,100, and almost 1,200 square feet each. Great exposure on the highway in a high traffic area on the Cashiers Road. Well and septic. Good parking and on an acre of land. Ready for a new owner. Offered at \$1,500,000. mls #1002291



Less than 2 miles from town, this one-of-a-kind generational estate has 10 acres, 3BD/4 1/2BA and over 5,000 sf of roughed-in rooms. Beautiful grounds. Country French living room with Dalle de Bourgogne French limestone floors, a fireplace, and patio featuring layered, southern vistas. Open dining with adjacent chefs kitchen. Primary suite has a double bath. Elevator and a stairwell lead to 2 guest bedroom suites. A rear porch and a 2-car garage. Offered at \$6,200,000 mls #1001680



About 3 miles from town, this 4 BD/3 full and 2 half bath home sits on over 5 acres with lovely mountain view. Private setting. The dwelling has a spacious floor plan with 2 main floor bedrooms, living and bonus room, kitchen and dining on the main level. Upstairs are 2 bedrooms with a Jack and Jill bath. Ample deck for outdoor living and to breathe in the cool air and take in the view. Offered at \$955,000. mls #1002336

White Oak Village – Units available from \$999,000 to \$1,099,000



Tucked away off Hicks road just outside the town limits, this small enclave of six 3BD/3BA townhouses each with a large deck that overlooks a gurgling stream. Walk in on the main level, to a lovely sitting room with a new high quality kitchen, with stainless steel appliances and natural light and stone countertops. Living room features a gas fireplace and 4-panel glass sliders. Primary suite and guest suite are upstairs. The terrace level has both interior and exterior access with a great room, kitchen and dining bar, BD and BA – great for family or income purposes.

• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •



Ten suggestions for 2026

Pastor Randy Lucas
Highlands United
Methodist Church

This time of year seems to be a good time for lists. The best movies, the best songs of the year, etc. And, since the rotation of area clergy has scheduled me as the leadoff batter in the 2026 Spiritual Speaking lineup, I invite you to consider the following list of suggestions for good spiritual health in the coming year.

Suggestion One

Cultivate Faith. Granted it's not always easy. And sometimes what we say we believe doesn't square with the reality on the ground. But for spiritual health, believing is essential. So, work at it. Don't give up on it when it's hard. Read the Bible. Pray. Worship. Hang out with people who exhibit a healthy faith and put it into practice.

Suggestion Two

Cultivate gratitude. Count your blessings. Be thankful for good food and good friends. Cherish and appreciate meaningful memories, laughter and a good cup of coffee.

Suggestion Three

Embrace beauty. Pay attention. It's all over the place. In flowers and lives and animals and poetry and music. Really, it's everywhere. Keep an eye out. Become a collector.

Suggestion Four

Don't take yourself too seriously. This is a big one! Don't pretend to know more than you do. Get over yourself. You're not always right. Sometimes you're the problem. Join the club!

Suggestion Five

Forgive - Seriously this is really, really important. Carrying around bitterness baggage too long is bad for the back.

Suggestion Six

Encourage someone. Look for the good in others and give voice to it. Let others know you see them. Let them know you appreciate them.

Suggestion Seven

Be a person of hospitality. Cultivate a welcoming spirit. Expand your circle. Help others find a seat at the table.

Suggestion Eight

Enjoy being alive. Second Century Early Church Father St. Irenaeus is credited with suggesting that the glory of God is a human being fully alive. Smell the roses. Take a breath. Take a hike. Read a poem. Sing a song. Catch a movie. Take a nap. Eat more ice cream. Give yourself a break. Cut yourself some slack.

• See SPIRITUALLY page 15

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

BLUEVALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Oliver Rice. Pastor 706-782-3965
Sundays: School: 10 a.m., Worship: 11
Sunday night services every 2nd & 4th Sunday at 7
Wednesdays: Mid-week prayer meeting: 7 p.m.

BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

828-269-3546 • Rev. Jamie Passmore. Pastor
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11

CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Aryn Williams-Reubel. Pastor 828-743-5298
Sundays: School at 9:30; Worship 10:30

GRACE CHAPEL ON HIGH HOLLY

9615 Dillard Rd Scaly Mountain, N.C.
Pastor Steve Kerhoulas. <http://www.Graceonhighholly.com>
Sunday School 9:45; Worship 11; Prayer Service Wed 5:30p
Men's and Women's Bible Study throughout the week

CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

The Rev'd Dr. Marc Robertson & Rev. Nick McGee
464 U.S. Hwy. 64E, Cashiers, NC

CAC@christanglicancashiers.org • 828-743-1701

Sunday: Adult Christian Ed, 9:15a; Holy Eucharist, 10:30a;
Fellowship 11:45a; Wed: Bible Study/Contemplative Prayer, 5p

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY, CASHIERS

Pastor Jacob Tedder • jacob@cashiers.church • 743-5470
www.cashiers.church

Sun. 10:45a; Wed Study 5:15p supper and childcare.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH

283 Spring Street - Sunday Service: 10:30 a.m.
Testimony meeting: 3rd Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Jim Kinard
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.
1st & 3rd Sunday night Service: 7 p.m.

Wednesdays - Supper at 6 p.m.

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685
3645 Cashiers Rd. Highlands, NC • Sr. Pastor Gary Hewins
Sun: Service 10:45am, Children's 10:30am
Wed.: Youth 5:30-7pm; Women's Bible Study: Mon. 4:30pm, Tues.
10am; Men's Bible Study: Wed. & Thurs. 7am @ Zookeeper
Bistro

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

Rev. W. Bentley Manning, Rector • 526-2968
5th and Main streets • www.incarnationwnc.org
Sunday: Rite I, spoken, 8 am in Chapel, Rite II with Choir 10:30
am in Sanctuary, Wed: Healing Eucharist 12 pm in Chapel,
Morning Prayer: Mon-Thurs 8:30 am in Chapel

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HIGHLANDS

828-526-4153 • www.fbchighlands.org
Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor • 220 Main Street, Highlands
Sun.: Worship 10:45 am; Sun.: Bible Study 9:30 am
Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 am; Women's 10:30 am

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Emily Wilmarth, pastor; Rev. Kelley Connelly Asso. Pastor
828-526-3175 • fbchighlands.org
Sun.: Adult Ed.: 10a; Worship 11a.; Tues: Men's Group 10a;
Wed: Bell Choir 4p. Chancel Choir: 5:30p

GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)
Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am
GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CASHIERS
Non-Denominational-Contemporary Worship
242 Hwy 107N. 1/4 miles from Crossroads in Cashiers
www.gracecashiers.com • Pastor Steve Doerter 743-9814
Services: Sundays 10am - Wed. - 7pm; Dinner - Wed. 6pm

HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

Hwy 107N. • Glenville, NC • 743-2729 • Nathan Johnson
Sunday: School 9:45a. Worship 11a & 7p. Bible Study 6p
Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Randy Reed. Pastor 828-421-9172 • 165 S. Sixth Street
Wed. Bible Study: 6 p.m.; Sundays: Worship: 11

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road
The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily
sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.
Sunday Worship is at 9a. & 6p. Wednesday Worship is 6p

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas. Pastor 526-3376
In-Person and live-streamed Worship Services
909a Bluegrass and 11a Traditional
www.highlandsmethodist.org

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA

2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741
Rev. Ken Langsdorf

Worship/Communion: 10:30 All are welcome.

Visit our website: Holy Family Lutheran Highlands NC

MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

8 miles south of Highlands on N.C. 28 S in Satolah
Pastor Zane Talley

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11. Choir: 6 p.m.

Wed: Bible Study and Youth Mtg.: 7 p.m.

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

Franklin • 828-634-1312 • mountainsynagoguewnc.com.
Services: 1st Fri. and 3rd Sat. and Rosh Hashanah & Yom
Kippur.

MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church
Sun: 10:30 a.m. at Big Ridge Baptist Church. 4224 Big Ridge
(4.5 miles from NC 107)

Weds: Youth Group 6 p.m.; Bible Study 6:30 p.m.;

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CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Fr. Jason K. Barone - 526-2418
Sat. 4pm 5/24/25-10/25/25; Sun. - 11am

SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Marty Kilby
Sundays: School - 10 a.m.; Worship - 11 a.m. & 7
Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Donald G. Bates • 526-3212
Sun.: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 10:45 a.m.; Worship: 6 p.m.

SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Rev. Richard Salmonson
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.

ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mass: Sun. 9a (English); Mon. 9:30a (Vatican II in Latin); Tues.
7p (Spanish); Wed., 9:30a (English)

THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

1448 Highway 107 S.. Office: • 743-2359 • Rev. Rob Wood
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UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

85 Sierra Drive. Franklin • uufranklin.org
Sunday Worship - 11 a.m.

WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers • 828-743-2122
Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

• FIRE REPORTS •

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Dec. 22.

Dec. 22

- At 2:06 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Oak Street.
- At 4:06 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a possible vehicle fire on S. 4th Street.

- At 5:35 p.m., the dept. was first-responders on Joanna Lane.

Dec. 23

- At 1:34 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance concerning the swatting event on Main Street.

Dec. 24

- At 5:29 p.m., the dept. responded to a

fire alarm at a residence on Gibson Street.

- At 8:17 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

Dec. 25

• A little past midnight, the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Cook Road.

- A little past midnight, the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Hwy 28 south (Walhalla Road).

• At 11:24 a.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a residence on Rolling Woods Drive.

• At 4:24 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a possible gas leak at a residence on Laurelwood Lane.

• At 5:09 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Shelby Circle.

• At 5:36 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Gibson Street.

• At 6:08 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Kettle Rock Road.

Dec. 27

• At 2:09 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

News from HPD Chief Holland

Macon County Emergency Management is continually striving to improve our County's Emergency Service and the level of preparedness in case of disaster. Preparing ourselves as individuals and families is just as important.

CodeRed Sign-Up

You can be automatically notified in the event of an emergency situation in Macon County as well as other critical community alerts when you sign-up for Code Red.

Examples include: evacuation notices, bio-terrorism alerts, boil water notices, and missing child reports."

<https://maconncc.org/emergency-management.html>

...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 14

Suggestion Nine

Cultivate community. Connect with other human beings. Be a helper. Be willing to receive help. Resist the temptation to be an island. Consider we're all in this together.

Suggestion Ten

Seek the welfare of others. Consider the mutuality you share with all God's children. Strive to see the face of Jesus in your neighbor. Do your part to make the world a better place. Be a vehicle for the

grace and love of God in the world.

There you have it. Not an exhaustive list. Certainly not a perfect list. But it's at least one possible place to start. And isn't that what the beginning of a new year is all about? So, let's do our best to be the best possible version of ourselves in 2026. And while we're at it, here's wishing for you a year of much love and light, much goodness, grace and happiness. Here's wishing for you an amazingly beautiful 2026. Happy New Year!

...SWATTING continued from page 12

to check for any visible explosive or incendiary devices.

After the preliminary search, officers assisted individuals who had sheltered in place with evacuation from the area. The WCU Police Department K-9 arrived and conducted an open-air sniff of buildings, sidewalks, and remaining vehicles. The K-9 did not detect any evidence of explosives.

Based on the similarity to a previous incident, the lack of evidence supporting the validity of the threat, and the results of the officer and K-9 searches,

officials determined this incident to be another hoax or swatting call. At 5:27 p.m., the threat was lifted.

According to the 911 call log, AT&T advised the phone was VoIP. Tracking a VoIP number is generally harder than a traditional call because they aren't tied to a physical location, allowing for easy spoofing and anonymity.

Like on Dec 11 when the web cam at Silver Creek Real Estate was taken down, the web cam on Main Street has been temporarily disabled. It is presumed that

the webcams were being used as a visual portal for the caller.

The Town of Highlands and the Highlands Police Department appreciate the assistance of all involved agencies.

"We take any threat to our community seriously and will continue to investigate this matter thoroughly," said Highlands Police Chief Andrea Holland." In addition to local resources, we have enlisted the assistance of the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation and requested assistance from the Fed-

eral Bureau of Investigations."

Chief Holland thanked the community for its continued support and patience.

"We continue to work to identify the person or persons responsible for these threats," she said. "We want to assure everyone that the safety of our community is our top priority."

Anyone with information regarding these swatting incidents in Highlands is encouraged to contact the Highlands Police Department at 828- 526-9431.

...HCLT continued from page 1

support coming together to protect the natural heritage that makes our area so special."

The year's conservation victories include:

- A generous 18-acre land donation to be stewarded as a nature preserve in the biodiverse Horse Cove area, expanding HCLT's protected holdings in this ecologically unique vicinity.

- A 35-acre conservation easement within Highlands town limits that protects important habitat for wildlife and plants and protects water quality for trout and other aquatic species. This property protects an iconic mountain meadow owned by the same family for generations.

- A 48-acre easement amendment in Cashiers at High Hampton which expands protection of land that is home to many Southern Appalachian mountain bogs, providing habitat for rare plant species found nowhere else.

And most recently, in partnership with Open Space Institute, 104 acres at the southeastern face of Whiteside Mountain. The Peregrine Preserve protects the headwaters of the Chattooga River and critical habitat for rare and endangered species. This remarkably diverse landscape has been evaluated by the NC Natural Heritage Program as unique and exceptional, the highest ranking in the state, indicating natural heritage significance.

"These conservation wins wouldn't

be possible without our supporters, from those who attend our hikes and workshops, to volunteers maintaining our trails, to generous landowners and financial donors," added Lance Hardin. "Every contribution matters in meeting the unprecedented challenges we face from development pressures and year-round impacts on our unique and irreplaceable natural areas."

Beyond land protection, HCLT engaged over 2,000 community members through environmental education programs, guided hikes, workshops, and Village Nature Series lectures over the past 12 months, demonstrating strong community investment in learning about and protecting the region's irreplaceable natu-

ral resources.

With several additional conservation projects expected still in the near future, HCLT looks toward 2026 with optimism while remaining focused on its five-year strategic plan emphasizing conservation targets and collaborative partnerships with other conservation organizations.

To learn more about HCLT's work or to support land conservation in the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau, visit www.hcltnc.org or call 828-526-1111.

Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust protected its first property in 1909 and now protects over 4,400 acres and counting of our unique and irreplaceable landscape in southern Macon and Jackson counties.

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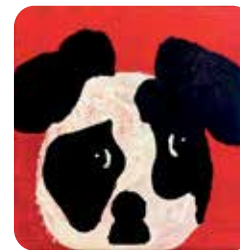
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dumas@gmail.com (st. 9/18)

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for 3 vehicles. Call 828-743-2655. (st. 10/9)

HIGHLANDS I-2 SPACES – 1 large or
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828-200-4071. (6/26)

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...RE TRANSACTIONS continued from page 12

Parcel Number	Deed Date	Assessed Value	Name	Sale Price
7409755077	6/2/25	247530	STEVENS INVESTMENTS, LLC	420000
7419023642	8/26/25	309760	KUSHNER, BRIAN TRUST	375000
7419205263	3/25/25	297060	PAUL, PATRICIA ANN	355000
7408229005	3/10/25	105520	ACHEE, JAMES P.	354000
7408323083	3/10/25	98860	CARLTON, WILL DARCEY JR.	354000
7408326090	3/10/25	83000	CK BENNETT FAMILY	354000
7408957216	1/8/25	271410	HYLAND FARMS, LLC	300000
7408127253	1/13/25	298220	KORSON, KIMBERLY	299000
7408230445	6/23/25	190970	TILLUNG, PEDER ANDREW	287000
6498229388	2/4/25	300170	35 CHASTAIN ROAD NC LLC	282500
7419169236	10/21/25	228430	469 HOLDINGS, LLC	274500
7408233113	2/13/25	249250	SARRIO, CAROLYN MARIE	249000
7409587858	8/29/25	202720	CULPEPPER, DAVID B	230000
7409590479	8/29/25	89400	CULPEPPER, DAVID B	230000
7408223603	8/22/25	217610	PAPAC, ANGELA LYNN	195000
7409504264	1/30/25	253700	GIGNILLIAT, HARRIS M.	190000
7409542487	10/22/25	808030	TUBRIDY, DAVID B	115000
7408216881	11/25/25	101900	ACHEE, JAMES P	112000

Parcel Number	Deed Date	Assessed Value	Name	Sale Price
7409792566	10/10/25	90750	ROESNER, JOANNE MAUREEN	110000
7419106527	5/28/25	107730	DANIEL, JASON	110000
7409867288	7/30/25	93220	PERKINS, SETH DEWAINE	100000
7409200550	6/10/25	115520	JONES, FRANK U	95000
7408223825	5/1/25	208810	TROTTER, MONTE D	78000
7408326090	3/7/25	83000	CK BENNETT FAMILY	71000
7419418765	2/27/25	126840	STEELE NC, LLC	70000
7408232137	5/5/25	65000	MELVIN CAPITAL INVESTMENTS, LLC	68000
7419555006	3/17/25	50000	VOS, SCOTT	60000
7418454317	1/23/25	36720	DANIEL, CHRISTOPHER H	50000
7419006299	4/15/25	50000	VW INVESTMENTS, LLC	49000
7418183833	11/24/25	229870	MCKENZIE, DEIDREA	48000
7409634352	1/14/25	3166490	HOLDBROOKS, KEITH & JACQUELINE TR	46000
7409806281	7/14/25	38630	NEELY, CONSTANCE LEVERING	40000
7409867288	2/27/25	93220	PERKINS, SETH DEWAINE	40000
7408928696	12/1/25	149810	KEENER, BRIGETTE KATHERINE	30000
7418291941	8/7/25	28220	SCALY MOUNTAIN INVESTMENTS, LLC	25000
7408956640	7/9/25	28050	LUCAS, ANNE MASON	4000

Please note:

RE Transactions for Highlands Township will be in the Jan. 8 edition.

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More than 130 college scholarships administered by the North Carolina Community Foundation are now open for applications.

Scholarships are available for students from all 100 counties, including for non-traditional students, and for students attending

all types of institutions, including community colleges.

As eligibility criteria vary greatly, all students are encouraged to complete the NCCF Universal Scholarships Application on the NCCF Scholarships Portal.

There is no cost to apply, and the application matches students with available scholarships using details like county of residence, GPA or intended major. After submitting answers to initial questions, students are provided with scholarships they may be eligible for and can then submit any additional information needed to apply. For step-by-step instructions and answers to frequently asked questions, visit nccommunity-foundation.org/Scholarships.

Interested students and guardians may sign up to attend a virtual information session about NCCF scholarships at 6 p.m. on Jan. 13, 2026, to learn more about the application process. This session is optional and is hosted in partnership with the NC State Educational Assistance Authority.

All scholarships are established through endowment funds at NCCF with criteria determined by the donor.

In 2025, NCCF awarded over \$3 million to over 500 students. As in 2025 NCCF will again offer scholarships to support incoming freshmen from the counties that were most impacted by Hurricane Helene. Go to nccommunity-foundation.org/Scholarships.

Notice of Property Tax Listing For 2026

Macon County has a permanent tax listing for its real estate, with ownership being certified by deed transfers. **However, the owner of real estate must report any changes to the property including new construction, deletions, and acreage changes.**

The owner as of January 1st must list **INDIVIDUAL PERSONAL PROPERTY** and **BUSINESS PERSONAL PROPERTY** per NCGS 105-296. This would include, but not limited to:

- 1. Mobile homes (on rented land), watercraft, motors, aircraft, and all UNTAGGED vehicles, trailers, campers, motor homes, and motorcycles.
- 2. All farm equipment that is used to produce income. If you claim farm deferments, you must list your equipment.
- 3. Household furnishings used in rental property.
- 4. Tools and equipment used by contractors and mechanics.
- 5. All machinery and equipment used in a business.
- 6. All leased equipment or leasehold interest.

Licensed Vehicles (*Tagged*) **DO NOT** Need to Be Listed.

All persons who own property on the date as of which is to be listed, subject to taxation must list such property within the period set forth in the notice and that any person who fails to do so will be subject to the penalties prescribed by law per N.C.G.S. 105-308.

You may list your property starting January 01, 2026, in the Macon County Tax Office. Please contact our office for the listing form. Our office is located at the Courthouse Annex on Main Street in Franklin or you may write:

Tax Administrator
Annex Bldg.
5 West Main St.
Franklin, NC 28734
828-349-2144

Tax Listing, will start on January 01, 2026 and ends on January 31, 2026. Office hours are Monday - Friday 8:00am-5:00pm.

Electronic listing is allowed for business personal property accounts that have previously filed.

Interest on 2025 Tax Bills begins on January 06, 2026. New owners who have purchased property between January 01, 2025 and December 31, 2025 may need to contact the Tax Collector at 828-349-2149 to check the status of any outstanding taxes or visit:

Website: <https://maconnc.org/Tax.html>
(Then click on Register and Pay Here)

N.C.G.S. 105-277.1 offers three programs for tax exclusion which are: Elderly or Disabled, Disabled Veteran or Circuit Breaker Tax Deferment.

Please contact our office at 828-349-2182 for an application. Applications must be submitted before **June 01, 2026** to see if you qualify.



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